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African Leaders Bulletin

13 February 1995

SUDAN: NIF Leaders Tighten Grip on Cabinet

President Umar al-Bashir announced a cabinet shuffle last Thursday that placed all key policymaking posts in the hands of the National Islamic Front (NIF), according to press accounts. The latest changes strengthen NIF leader Hasan al-Turabi's and the NIF's stranglehold on the government, particularly on foreign policy.

- The NIF second-in-command, **Ali Uthman Taha**, is the new Foreign Minister, replacing the moderate Husayn Abu Salih, who was the last major non-NIF cabinet member and long a thorn in the side of NIF hardliners. **Dr. Ghazi Salah al-Din Atabani**—one of the most influential members of the Front and a pegpoint on regional efforts to end Sudan's civil war—was named Taha's deputy, replacing non-NIF member Archbishop Gabriel Roreg.

- The appointment of Taha—a Turabi protege—as Foreign Minister is an apparent triumph for NIF hardliners. It is consistent with [redacted] a growing belief by the NIF elite that Washington has stepped-up confrontation with Khartoum, to include orchestrating the trial of the defendants in the New York bombing case, and that Sudan must respond accordingly. The move also may signal Khartoum's intention to brook no compromise with US and other Western governments concerned with Khartoum's behavior on terrorism, the civil war exporting fundamentalism, and human rights issues. [redacted]

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Several other NIF insiders swapped key foreign and domestic policy posts during the latest shuffle, the media add.

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs veteran **Mahdi Ibrahim Muhammad**—a close associate of Turabi and an experienced diplomat—was named Minister of State in the President's Office—Ghazi's old title. Taha's former job as head of the Social Planning Ministry—a primary vehicle for NIF control of domestic policy—went to Muhammad Uthman al-Khalifa, a prominent member of the Khatmiyya Sufi sect and close personal friend of Turabi. [redacted]

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This Bulletin *was prepared by* [redacted] *can be reached on* [redacted] *or secure* [redacted]

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